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Venezuela

Kosher Foods

Venezuelan Market for Kosher Food 2004

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Report Highlights:

The Venezuelan Jewish Community is the third largest in South America, after Argentina and Brazil, with an estimated population of about 23,000. The kosher market is supplied by locally produced products certified by the local rabbi, and by certified imports mainly from Israel and the United States. Venezuela's major food processors have many of their products kosher certified. A list of contacts and contact information for key importers and distributors of kosher food is included in this report.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Caracas [VE1]
[VE]

Venezuelan Market for Kosher Food

The first Jewish immigrants in Venezuela were reported around 1824 when the first organized community was established in the city of Coro, located in the northwest part of the country. Sephardim Jews coming from Holland and Curacao were the first immigrants. However, since colonial times there is information that confirms some presence of Sephardim Jews. Information points out that in 1693 a small congregation existed in the town of Tucacas. A second migration of Jews from North Africa arrived in the year 1870. Jews from Eastern Europe later joined the group. After the rise of Hitler, Jews came from Germany and elsewhere in central Europe.

Venezuela's Jewish Community is estimated as the third largest in South America, after Argentina and Brazil, with an estimated population of about 30,000 out of a total national population of 25 million. However, since the year 1998, this population has been decreasing. The exact size and trend of the Venezuelan Jewish population is difficult to accurately identify, however according to some kosher store owners as well as other FAS/Caracas contacts the Jewish population is estimated now at about 23,000 people. In 2001, the official national census did not include religious indicators for the first time. Caracas is the home of the largest Jewish community in the country.

The Venezuelan Jewish community is divided in two major groups by geographic origin. The Sephardim, descendants of Spanish, North African, Lebanese, and other Middle Eastern and Mediterranean countries that comprises about 55 percent of the Jewish community in Venezuela. The Ashkenazim descendants from German, Polish, Russian and other eastern European countries, account for the remaining 45 percent of Venezuela's Jewish community. A central organization called the "Confederacion de Asociaciones Israelitas de Venezuela" (CAIV) was established to represent the entire community.

Generally speaking, the level of commitment to the religion is high. Nearly all the synagogues in the country are Orthodox, though the level of personal observance varies greatly and membership in the synagogue does not necessarily mean regular attendance on Shabbat or rigorous observance of the dietary laws. Orthodox Jews, who comprise about 10 percent of the Jewish community, are the main consumers of kosher food. The increase of kosher food consumption is observed during certain Jewish religious celebrations, particularly in the months of September and October.

Non-Traditional Kosher Consumers

Apart from the Jewish community, there may also be a growing number of consumers for kosher food in Venezuela, since some people believe that these products have higher food safety standards. Kosher store-owners estimate that 10 percent of their current customers are not Jewish.

Other possible consumers of kosher products in Venezuela include Muslims, vegetarians and lactose intolerant people. There are no reported figures on size of the Muslim community in Venezuela. FAS/contacts have reported that vegetarians look for kosher food, as they know that they can trust the "parve" labeling to guarantee no meat or dairy content.

Domestic Production and Market for Kosher Products

Approximately 90 percent of fresh kosher products are produced in Venezuela, and about 50 percent of kosher canned and frozen products are produced domestically, the rest is imported either from Israel or the United States.

There are two kashrut-authorized committees that provide certification for kosher products in Venezuela, the Israeli Union of Caracas, UIC (Unión Israelita de Caracas) and the Israeli Association of Venezuela, AIV, (Asociación Israelita de Venezuela.) They work closely with domestic manufacturers to ensure that their products meet the standards mandated by Jewish diet law thereby allowing them to be sold as kosher certified products. The kashrut committees perform strict inspections in every kosher manufacturing facility in order to be able to certify the products as kosher. The UIC and the AIV also import directly from Israel and the United States and they work closely with food importers in order to have enough stocks of products for religious celebrations.

For meat and meat products, kosher certifying organizations have arranged with some Venezuelan slaughterhouses to perform slaughter in separate areas and under the supervision of a rabbi and employ kosher-trained staff. Meats are mainly from the local market or imported from Argentina. Although imports of meat from the United States are preferred among some Jews because their preparation is considered well supervised, other contacts have expressed that imports of meat from the States have not been done during the last four years due to the difficulties in obtaining import permits.

Venezuela's major food processing companies have many products certified kosher. Kosher products produced domestically are listed at the UIC, AIV, Centro Beth Shemuel's web sites and other local magazines and at major Jews congregations' centers. They are updated periodically. (For further information, please see section on contacts)

Kosher foods and ingredients can be found at independent stores located mainly in the neighborhoods of San Bernardino, La Florida, Los Chorros, Los Dos Caminos, Los Palos Grandes, and in some delicatessen stores in Caracas and other cities. Kosher certified products are also sold at a few supermarket chains, but rarely exhibited as a special kosher section. There are opportunities for U.S. kosher products in both the small independent retailers and main supermarket chains.

Kosher restaurants and food service can be found at local Jewish clubs, congregations, schools and neighborhoods.

Marketing

FAS/Caracas will be promoting U.S. kosher products in Venezuela and will be providing information to kosher importers and associations on the International Kosher Food Service Trade Show in New York City, which will take place from October 26-27, 2004. This show is a good opportunity for Venezuelan importers to get more knowledge on the broad supply of U.S. kosher products and diversity of brands.

For more information on the show, please consult the trade show web site at <http://www.kosherfest.com> or contact the FAS/Caracas office at (58-212) 975-8861 or see our web site at <http://embajadausa.org.ve/usda.html>. For more information about Venezuelan congregations and import contacts, please see the next section of key contacts.

KEY CONTACTS:**Jews Associations And Other Organizations:****UNION ISRAELITA DE CARACAS**

Av. Marquez del Toro, No. 9
San Bernardino
Caracas, D.C. – Venezuela
Or P.O. Box 14452, Caracas 10111
Phone (58-212) 552.8222
Fax (58-212)
E-mail: presidencia@uic.org.ve
Web site: <http://www.uic.org.ve>

ASOCIACION ISRAELITA DE VENEZUELA

3861 Zona 1010-A Caracas 1050 Venezuela
Tel. (58-212) 574.82.97 / 574.49.75 / 574.39.53 / 576.45.72 / 577.31.36
Fax (58-212) 577.0249
E-mail: aiv@aiv.org
Web site: <http://www.aiv.org>

EMBASSY OF ISRAEL IN VENEZUELA

Centro Empresarial Miranda
Av. Francisco de Miranda con Av. Principal de Los Ruices
Piso 4, Oficina 4-D
Caracas - Venezuela
Tel. (58-212) 239-4921/ 4511
Fax (58-212) 239-4320

RABINATO DEL CENTRO BETH SHEMUEL

Av. La Capilla, Quinta Beth Shemuel
La Florida – Caracas
Venezuela
Tel. (58-212) 731-6029
Fax (58-212) 731-2226
Web site: <http://www.bethshemuel.cl.tc/>

CLUB HEBRAICA

Avenida Principal de Los Chorros,
Caracas 1071, VENEZUELA
Or: Apartado Postal 16004, Caracas 1013-A, Venezuela
Tel. (58- 212) 273.6711
Fax: (58- 212) 238.4795
<http://www.hebraica-online.com>
E-mail: hebraica@cantv.net

Food Stores, Importers and Distributors:**SUPERMERCADO KOSHER WORLD**

Av. Sucre entre 4ta. Y 5ta. Transversal
Centro Parque Boyacá, frente a Balmoral
P.B. Local 12 - Los Dos Caminos
Caracas - Venezuela
Tel. (58-212) 285.0684/ 1824
Tel. 0500 KOSHERW
E-mail: info@koserworld.com.ve
Web site: <http://www.koserworld.com.ve>

COMERCIAL GALIPAN

Av Roraima con Cagigal,
Urb. San Bernardino
Caracas - Venezuela
Tel. (58-212) 551-7763/ 7880/ 7978
Fax (58-212) 551 552.8684

DELICATESSES REY DAVID

4ta. Transversal, Av. Andres Bello
con calle Alfredo Jahn
Urb. Los Palos Grandes
Caracas – Venezuela
Tel. (58-212) 284-1790/ 238-8011
Fax (58-212) 285-0605

FRIOSIA

Autopista Valle-Coche
Subida a Tazón, Kilometro 8
Frigorificos Militares Tazón
(sentido Hoyo de la Puerta-Caracas)
Tel. (58-212) 682-5761
Fax (58-212) 681.4987
E-mail: info@friosia.net
Web site: www.friosia.net

ALIMENTOS OCEANIA

Calle Bolivar, Edf. Fryan,
Urb. La Trinidad
Caracas – Venezuela
Tel. (58-212) 943.3737
Fax (58-212) 945.0932
E-mail: oceania@cantv.net
Web site: <http://www.alimentosoceania.com/>

DISTRIBUIDORA BEKA

Av. Principal, Zona Industrial La Candelaria, Kilómetro 9
Edif. La Candelaria, Nivel Sótano, Filas de Mariches
Caracas – Venezuela
Tel. (58-212) 532-1223 / 0006
Fax (58-212) 532-2343
E-mail: akbeka@telcel.net.ve

DISTRIBUIDORA FINE FOODS

Calle Tiuna, Galpón No. 5

Sector Industrial La Naya

Carretera Vieja las Minas de Baruta (frente a Maderas Tiuna)

Tel (58-212) 976.3861

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